NOAA Style and Content Guidelines for the World Wide Web:

Section 3: Content and Style Guidelines for Category 2 Pages

February 1, 1998

3.1 Definition of NOAA Category 2 Home Page

Category 2 home pages are Web documents sponsored by an official NOAA organization that is one organizational level below the Line Office. The list of current or future home pages corresponding to the Category 2 definition is presented in Attachment 1.

The guidelines for Category 2 Web pages is intentionally less restrictive than for Category 1. This is in the interest of minimizing the number of constraints that may inhibit creative development of new Web page designs as the technology develops.

In the interest of promoting a well-defined NOAA organizational presence on the Web, offices owning Category 2 page are strongly encouraged (though not required) to follow the more restrictive Category 1 design and content guidelines.

3.2 HTML Version

Category 2 Web pages may use non-standard HTML, audio, and Java features as seen fit by the sponsoring organization. In such cases, the developers are encouraged to identify pages as such, and should clearly indicate the HTML version being utilized and the Web browsers (along with their version numbers) that will properly render the display. Inasmuch as is practicable, the developer should implement electronic means that detect the user's browser capabilities and inform the user that he will be unable to exercise the special advanced features of that page.

3.3 Page Length

There are no specific page length requirements for Category 2 pages; however, webmasters should use good judgment when balancing the editorial demands of content versus page length. Once again, recommendations outlined for Category 1 pages should be considered as guidelines for limiting page length for Category 2 pages.

3.4 Document Headers

3.4.1 Supporting Text-Only Viewing

Developers of Category 2 home pages should provide the capability to view content with text-only browsers (e.g., Lynx or Web browsers with graphics turned off). This

implementation may be accomplished either by providing a text-only version of the HTML (and a hypertext link to that document) or by use of the ALT attribute with each graphic, IMG, tag; the attribute must have an adequate text description of the content within the graphic.

3.4.2 Graphical Header

Category 2 home pages must clearly identity the sponsoring organization in the header or banner and its affiliation with NOAA or the Line Office. The name of the organization should be spelled out and the organization's affiliation can be indicated by use either of a standard Line Office icon or a standard NOAA icon.

3.4.3 Text-Based Header

It is recommended that developers follow the same guidelines for Category 2 pages as for Category 1 with respect to text-based headers. If developers choose not to follow Category 1 text-based page header guidelines, it is recommended that they have placed at the top of the page, a string of text (standard paragraph size or italics) identifying the Web page's sponsoring office as it is represented in the hierarchy of the NOAA organization. For example, The Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory Home Page would display "U.S. Department of Commerce/NOAA/OAR/ERL/PMEL"

Whether to spell out the office's full name or to use acronyms is at the developer's discretion. It is also suggested to use this string to provide links to the appropriate offices in the organization's hierarchy.

3.5 Document Body

There are no special requirements for the body of Category 2 pages.

3.6 Document Footers

3.6.1 Button Bar/Horizontal List of Links

A Category 2 site may provide a horizontal list of links by providing a solid line after the body of the Home Page followed by minimum graphics or text only links. For example:

[NOAA Home Page][LO Home Page][Personnel Locator][Databases Search]
[Web Pages Search][Directory] [Announcements] [Option 1...]

Note Category 2 Web page developers may place the elements of the following sections (3.6.2 to 3.6.4) onto a separate "credits" page with a link from the appropriate Home Page.

3.6.2 NOAA Icon and Organization Address

A Category 2 Home Page will provide (italicized) the organization's name, street address (for main office) and city, state, and zip. A contact telephone number is desirable but optional. Immediately to left of the address, it is recommended that a standard approximately 60 x 60 pixel NOAA icon be inserted.

3.6.3 Contact Address / Page Author

A Category 2 page must provide at minimum one contact Internet address for feedback on Web page content and layout. Inclusion of the authors' names is encouraged but not required. This element must also be left justified.

3.6.4 Revision Date

All home pages must contain the date of the most recent revision in the footer. The date should be left justified and in the format:

<month written out> <numeric calendar number>,<four digit calendar year number>

e.g., November 7, 1998.

3.6.5 Page URL

The URL of the page should be the last item displayed in the footer of the home page for authentication purposes.

3.7 Color and Background

There are no special color or background requirements for Category 2 pages.

3.8 Graphics and Images

In building Category 2 Web pages, developers should carefully consider the simple guidelines and rules outlined in Section 2.8 for Category 1 pages. It is recognized that many home pages falling into Category 2 utilize potentially "cutting edge" features of Web servers and browsers. Developers, however, should keep in mind the technological capabilities of their intended user audience and should make every effort to accommodate alternative methods of user interaction.

3.9 Title Tag

When creating an HTML document, the title of that document is of critical importance from the point of view of electronic search mechanisms universally available to users on the WWW. Web search engines such as "Yahoo" and "Alta Vista" return the title of the document when a "hit" occurs. Since, literally hundreds or thousands of titles may be

returned for such a search, it is important that the title be highly descriptive of the information content of the HTML document. Otherwise, the user may be left to wonder why that document was even hit.

3.10 Use of NOAA Icon

To encourage recognition of Web pages as elements of NOAA, a standard NOAA icon should appear where appropriate.